

# Changing Role of Teacher: A review of literature on challenges faced by teachers.

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## Objective

- The paper aims at identifying the changing role of teachers.
- The paper identifies challenges faced by teachers.
- This paper aims at providing suggestion on overcome the challenges

## Research methodology:

The paper deals with is a macro level study and it is descriptive study in nature, based on secondary data collected from the published and unpublished records secondary records, reports and contributions of several institutions, organizations and individuals in India. Specifically, the secondary sources include Annual Reports of UGC, Planning Commission, Education Department of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Economic Survey and other journals, books and websites

In a globalised knowledge world, occupational stress has taken an international stature by its intensity and virtue. Teachers especially working at university level are under a great deal of stress related to various occupational stressors. Occupational stressors contribute to organizational inefficiency, high staff turnover, absenteeism due to sickness, decreased quality, and quantity of practice, increased costs of health care, and decreased job satisfaction. When there is a prolonged experience of occupational stress, it leads to professional burnout. The paper aims at identifying the nature of occupational stress prevalent in higher education sector in India and abroad. Several researches, except a few, have concluded that a significant number of teachers are affected by work-related stress. The paper identifies the factors intrinsic to teachers stress. Indian experiences along with international studies in relation to higher educational job stress are presented here. Discussions are made on the impact of teachers stress and coping strategies. Studies reveal that creating a high performance organization requires understanding the influence of stress on academic performance. Critical observations are made upon reviewed researches. The paper concludes from the review of the studies that stress is a global phenomenon and teachers are not exception.

**Key words:** Coping strategies, globalization, occupational stress, organizational change, organizational role.

## INTRODUCTION

Our common perception is that teaching is not a stressful occupation, but, worldwide studies have consistently found that work-related stress affects lives of significant numbers of teachers causing

psychological, physiological and behavioural impacts. Johnson and others made an exhaustive study in the USA and found that teaching is considered as one of more stressful occupation than 26 other occupations. In a globalised knowledge world, occupational stress has taken an international stature by its intensity and virtue. The paper aims at identifying the nature of occupational stress prevalent in higher education sector in India and abroad. Historically there has been a great deal of research on occupations that are typically seen as stressful such as those with low status, control, or reward, as well other demanding occupations such as nursing, police work, and teaching. However, there has been less research on stress in higher education staff (Abouserie, 1996). Abouserie states that academics willingly study other groups yet seldom study themselves. This may be due to the perception that while academic work is not highly paid, it is seen as highly autonomous (Winefield & Jarrett, 2001) and control is often seen as a buffer to work stress (Karasek, 1979). However, in the last 10 years, interest in research on academics and university employees has been growing, with significant contributions made by Kinman (2001, 2008), Winefield (2003), and others.

## TEACHERS AND STRESS

In relation to the profession of teaching, where a teacher is viewed as dispensers of knowledge; teachers are increasingly perceived as facilitators or managers of knowledge. They work in a constant socially isolated environments surrounded by hostile views and sometimes threat of physical abuse, and at the same time under a constant fear and threat of accountability for each and every action of both own self and that of the pupil. This alone can be a sufficient cause for stress for an individual. But in the case of a teacher it is multiplied by other factors as well Teaching has been identified as one of the most stressful professions today. The reasons for that are quite similar to other stressful occupations in the world. In a survey assessing the stress levels of various jobs by the Health and Safety Executive, teaching came out top. The report, The Scale of Occupational Stress: further analysis of the impact of demographic factors and type of job, published in 2000, found that 41.5% of teachers reported themselves 'highly stressed', while 58.5% came into a 'low stress' category, while 36% of teachers felt the effects of stress all or most of the time. This is indeed an alarming state and visibly also the biggest reason for school teachers quitting at a very high percentage or seeking professional help to fight back stress. The figures from teacher's support line, USA, show different reasons that cause distress to teachers:

- Stress, anxiety and depression 27%
- Conflict with managers or colleagues 14%
- Pressure of workload and excessive changes 9%
- Loss of confidence and performance anxiety 9%
- Relationship, marital and family problems 5%

This shows that the highest percentage is job related stress that can wreck a professional teacher personally while discharging his duties.

Causes of Stress for Teachers From the outside teaching seem all together a different job with summer vacations, winter vacations and spring breaks. But considering everything that a teacher has to go through everyday all these days off do not do much to get a teacher back in the right frame of mind. According to a research the major causes of teacher stress are:

- Excessive working hours
  - Excessive workload
  - Rising class sizes and increase in number of students which result in to poor student teacher ratio
  - Pressures due to inspection
  - Changes in curriculum & courses
  - Changes to assessment & testing requirements
  - Poor management
  - Workplace bullying
  - Pupil misbehaviour
  - Risk of violence from pupils, parents and intruders
  - Lack of support with bureaucracy, form filling and routine tasks
  - Lack of job security due to redundancy and fixed term contracts
  - Lack of control over the job
  - Threat to early retirement arrangements
  - Denigration of profession by politicians & media
  - Lack of public esteem
- Effects of Stress

A study by Kinman and Court (2010) investigated the levels of job related stressors in a sample of 9740 academic employees at higher education institutions in the UK including job demands, control, social support, interpersonal relationships, role clarity, and involvement in organizational change and found that all except one (control) exceeded the safe benchmarks as stipulated by the Health and Safety Executive.

Tytherleigh et al. (2005) found evidence that university staff exhibited significantly less organizational commitment compared to other private and public sector workers, as well as being more stressed by lack of control and resources, and worries about low pay and benefits.

Winefield and Jarret (2001) report that in a sample of over 2000 Australian university staff, 43.7% were classified as clinical cases on the General Health Questionnaire suggesting high levels of anxiety and

depression. Winefield and Jarrett (2001) state that stress levels in academic institutions are high compared to many other professions and that stress has increased significantly over the last 15 years.

Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, and Stough (2001), citing Association of University Teachers (AUT) figures from 1990, stated that 49% of UK university employees had stressful jobs. This situation may be worsening, as an AUT study in 2003 cited by Tytherleigh, Webb, Cooper, and Ricketts (2005) found that 93% of AUT members had suffered work-related stress with high levels of dissatisfaction with pay and workload. Gillespie et al. (2001) identify several key factors that are commonly associated with stress in academic staff. These include work overload, time pressure, lack of prospects, poor levels of reward and recognition, fluctuating roles, poor management, poor resources and funding, and student interactions.

Other stressors identified from the literature by Gillespie et al. (2001) include high expectations, low job security, lack of communication, inequality, and lack of feedback.

Lease (1999) states that the effect of stress in university staff is not just of consequence to employees themselves, but can have serious consequences for students as well.

Singh and Bush (1998) suggest that the persistent demands of academic life are likely to lead to negative consequences for staff.

Abouserie (1996) states that academics have a large number of competing roles such as teaching, research, seeking funding, writing papers, and meeting seminar and tutorial commitments, and found that 74% of staff were moderately stressed and nearly 15% were seriously stressed with lecturers the most negatively affected followed by research assistants and professors.

Sharpley, Reynolds, Acosta, and Dua (1996) found that stress was a significant problem for 25% of staff with reports of increased anxiety, absence, injuries, illnesses, and poorer physical health; and Blix, Cruise, Mitchell, and Blix (1994) found that 48% of staff reported some health problems resulting from work stress. Fisher (1994) claimed that academic salaries are falling and workloads increasing

Indeed, Blix et al. (1994) report that 84% of their sample of 400 university staff reported that their productivity at work had been negatively affected by stress and 33% felt it suffered at least 50% of the time. Boyd and Wylie (1994, cited in Gillespie et al., 2001) found that workload and stress resulted in less time spent on research, publishing and development, and lower teaching standards, as well as having negative effects on staff relationships, emotional health, family relationships, and leisure activities. Blix et al. (1994) showed that job stress significantly increased the likelihood of staff intending to leave academia.

Finally, Bowen and Schuster (1985, cited in Gillespie et al., 2001) also reported that stress had a negative impact on staff morale and many of the interviewed academics were angry, embittered, and felt devalued and abandoned.

## **REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

Studies conducted on teachers stress in India and abroad reveal that academic 'role stress' is the most prominent determining factor followed by 'organizational structure and climate'. Teaching job is no more static and dogmatic. Faculty members have realized that 'change' with globally competitive education

market is inevitable. Concept of 'job security' is a fuss now-a-days. Traditional focus of the universities has been changed to benchmark on world standard. There is a paradigm shift on teachers' attitude towards teaching and research. On one hand, growth and career advancement of many teachers working in private institutes in particular, get stagnant due to exhaustive workload, but, on the other hand ample scope is waiting for quality teachers to access global lucrative education market.

However, very few researches have examined the impact of the teachers' work-related strains on students' performances. Due attention has not been paid on organizational effectiveness in relation to the attainment of academic objectives. Many institutions have apprehended the employee stress but focus on the symptoms only. Evidences on stress audit and befitting institutional stress management technique are hardly found.

## CONCLUSIONS

The prevention and management of workplace stress requires organizational level interventions, because it is the organization that creates the stress. Further, several stress management techniques such as emotional intelligence training, cognitive behavioural management techniques, social supportive systems, counselling services, yoga and sports activities should be introduced. Success in managing and preventing stress will depend on the culture in the organization. At university level, the culture of openness and understanding, rather than of criticism, is essential.

The literature available on stress amongst faculty members highlights the fact that with emergence of business dynamics, academics no longer remains a profession which is stress free. Increased globalization and competition, completely student centric approach has made the role of faculty members more challenging. Their role is not restricted to only teaching rather they also have to contribute towards other institution building activities. Common stressors identified from studies, globally, of course including India are:

### Work Overload

- Time Constraint,
- Lack of Promotion Opportunities,
- Inadequate Recognition
- Inadequate Salary,
- Changing Job Role,
- Inadequate Participation in Management
- Inadequate Resources and Funding
- Student Interaction
- Publish or Perish
- Professional Development
- Poor Standard of Students
- Job Insecurity

- Intense Competition
- Adaptation to New Technology
- Role ambiguity etc

Common strategies identified by various studies, globally, including India are both workplace as well as individual interventions. Among workplace interventions, these include:

- Reviewing the fairness of procedures and processes related to promotion,
- Adequacy of current pay,
- Reward and recognition systems, Balance workloads more effectively and avoid
- Periods of intense work pressure, processes and programs to reduce job insecurity etc.
- Personal Interventions suggested in various studies are: Learning to recognize and understand stress,
- Managing expectations,
- Planning and prioritizing,
- Taking regular breaks from the work station,
- Regularly exercising, and seeking alternative
- Therapies for stress relief Balance between work and non-work
- Switching off from work, and focusing on non work-related
- Interests Support from co-workers and management,
- Recognition and achievement
- High morale
- Flexible working conditions
- Study leave
- Value of drawing on support in the workplace
- Sharing one's workload with co-workers,
- Being able to ask for help,
- Being able to rely on support staff and support and services. Attending conferences etc

We have seen various stressors and coping strategies through various studies. However, the fact of the matter remains, stress cannot be eliminated from the organizations completely. It can only be reduced with the help of workplace as well as personal interventions to optimum level, without compromising with the efficiency of the individual and his contribution to the organization.

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